

CD 2013 -- 20



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

2012-13
season

Lorna MacDonald, soprano
Henri-Paul Sicsic, piano

Monday, February 25, 2013
7:00 p.m. Walter Hall
Edward Johnson Building

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Lorna MacDonald, soprano
Lois Marshall Chair in Voice Studies
Henri-Paul Sicsic, piano

1 Menuet antique

Maurice Rav

1875-1937

- 2 Song group
Cinq melodies populaires grecques (*Calvocoressi*, from the Greek)
2. Le réveil de la mariée
3. Là-bas, vers l'église
4. Quel galant m'est comparable
5. Chanson des cueilleuses des lentsiques
6. Tout gai!

7. Nocturne No. 1 in E-flat minor, Op. 33 No. 1

Gabriel Fauré

1845-1924

8. T. 1/4

9 Song group

10 Mandoline (*Verlaine*)

11 Puisque l'aube grandit (*Verlaine*)

12 Automne (*Silvestre*)

13 Nell (*Leconte de Lisle*)

INTERMISSION

14 Clair de lune

Claude Debussy

15 Minstrels (Prélude No. 12, Premier livre)

1862 - 1918

Song group

16 Pierrot (*Banville*)

17 Zéphyr (*Banville*)

18 Fête-Galante (*Banville*)

19 Pantomime (*Verlaine*)

20 Apparition (*Mallarmé*)

21 Regret (*Bourget*)

22 Mandoline (*Verlaine*)

23 Clair de lune (*Verlaine*)

Program Notes

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Menuet antique (1895)

Cinq mélodies populaires grecques

(Five Greek Folksongs) (1904/6)

Le réveil de la mariée (The bride's awakening)

Là-bas, vers l'église (Down there by the church)

Quel galant m'est comparable? (What gallant can compare with me?)

Chanson des cueilleuses de lentisques (Song of the lentisk gatherers)

Tout gai! (So merry!)

The first of four minuets that Ravel was to write for piano, the short *Menuet antique* was also the first music in which he recreated the music of antiquity through his own imagination. The somewhat modal character of the music, with its flattened leading note, mirrors a *faux-antique* Grecian illustration on the cover of the printed score, depicting a Greek shepherd playing an aulos. Still, for all the archaisms – not to mention the anachronism, since there weren't any minuets before the 16th century – the *Menuet antique* that the 20 year-old Ravel wrote in 1895 bears more than a passing resemblance to the *Menuet pompeux* that Chabrier had written over a decade earlier.

Speaking of his ballet *Daphnis et Chloé*, Ravel indicated that he was "less scrupulous about archaism than faithful to the Greece of my dreams." The same may be said for the *Menuet antique*. But the *Cinq mélodies populaires grecques* (Five Greek Folksongs) that he wrote ten years later do incorporate specific Greek melodies selected from a collection by the critic M.D. Calvocoressi. Ravel wrote his first five settings in 1904 in less than 36 hours to illustrate a lecture on Greek and Armenian folksongs by a mutual friend. Impressed by the results, Calvocoressi subsequently commissioned three more and translated them into French (the initial performance was likely in Greek). Ravel put together a new selection of five and they were published two years later. In the first song, *Le réveil de la mariée* (The bride's awakening),

the lean, shimmering piano accompaniment with its repeated open fifths enhances the simplicity of the original folksong and suggests overtones of church bells. The sonorous, spread chords of the second song, *Là-bas, vers l'église* (Down there by the church), honouring the fallen in a village cemetery, also evoke church bells. In *Quel galant m'est comparable?* (What gallant can compare with me?), with just 31 bars of music Ravel vividly paints a picture of a swaggering lover, boasting of his prowess. Ravel continues to say more with less in the *Chanson des cueilleuses de lentisques* (Song of the lentisk gatherers). We hear the sadness of the women toiling in the fields harvesting mastic as they dream of unattainable love and, in the gentle, rolling movement of the piano line, Ravel's music seems to offer comfort. The final song, *Tout gai!* (So merry!), brilliantly catches the whirl of a country dance

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845-1924)

Nocturne No. 1, in E-flat minor, Op. 33 No. 1 (c1875)

Mandoline (Mandolin), Op. 58 No. 1 (1891)

Puisque l'aube grandit (Since day is breaking) Op. 61 no. 2 (1892-4)

Automne (Autumn), Op. 18 No. 3 (1878)

Nell (Nell), Op. 18 No. 1 (1878)

Like Debussy and his much-loved Chopin, Fauré put the piano at the centre of his output. But unlike Debussy, Fauré chose not to give his compositions poetic, descriptive titles. Not for him Debussy's submerged cathedral or Delphic dancer or the scaffold or water nymph of a Ravel. Like Chopin, Fauré preferred barcarolles, impromptus, preludes, and nocturnes. In Fauré's hands, the nocturne travels far in the half century from the first (c1875) to the thirteenth (1921). In the First, many of the hallmarks of the mature Fauré are already present in its melodic and harmonic ambiguities and in its ABA structure. Dark and reflective at

the outset, the music becomes increasingly impassioned and troubled, ending in sadness and resignation. "Everything is new in this nocturne, inspiration, tonal relations, form and instrumental style," wrote French pianist Alfred Cortot.

Fauré wrote his first songs in his late teens and he continued to write them steadily until a couple of years before his death at the age of 79. His art is central to the history of the French *mélodie*. The gentle *Mandoline* (*Mandolin*) represents a lover's serenade, perhaps with a touch of nostalgia, certainly with affection, and coloured by a suggestion of the sound of the mandolin. The song comes from the *Fêtes galantes* collection by the Symbolist poet Paul Verlaine, part of a short cycle that Fauré conceived on holiday in Venice. He returned to Verlaine for the cycle *La bonne chanson*, commenting afterwards that he had never written anything as spontaneously as this music. The radiant dawn portrayed in the cycle's second song, *Puisque l'aube grandit* (*Since day is breaking*), is set to a characteristic rippling piano accompaniment, with subtle changes of key. *Automne* (*Autumn*), is a sombre meditation on passing time, concluding dramatically with the realisation that time past will be no more. Fauré was just 33 when he wrote this setting of a poem by Armand Silvestre and it is now one of his best-known songs. In *Nell* (*Nell*), French poet Leconte de Lisle tips his hat to Burns in one of a series of Scottish poems. This radiant ode to a lover draws great depth of colour from Fauré, with a rippling piano accompaniment that elegantly combines harmonic subtlety and melodic flexibility with sincerity of expression.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Clair de Lune (*Suite bergamasque*)

(c1890, rev.1905)

Minstrels (*Préludes*, Book I) (1909-10)

Pierrot (*Pierrot*) (1882)

Zéphyr (*Zephyr*) (1881)

Fête-galante (*Gallant party*) (1882)

Pantomime (*Pantomime*) (1883)

Apparition (*Apparition*) (1884)

Regret (*Regret*) (1884)

Mandoline (*Mandolin*) (1882)

Clair de lune (*Moonlight*) (1882)

The *Suite bergamasque*, from which the lovely *Clair de Lune* is drawn, is inspired by the poetry of Verlaine. In it, Debussy evokes a pastoral world of the imagination with its allusions to the Italian *commedia dell'arte* and to the French *clavecinistes* of the 18th century. (These themes will recur in the early Debussy songs that Debussy began to compose around the same time, a selection of which is included in this recital). The silvery, ineffable *Clair de Lune* is the third of the four pieces in the *Suite bergamasque* collection and its title translates literally - but with little of the poetry of the original - as 'Moonlight.'

A dreamlike world predominates as Debussy blends the elusive and intangible with the more recognisable in his *Préludes*. He merely suggests a title at the end of each prelude, half wanting to help the listener conjure up mental pictures while listening, half afraid that the titles will be taken too literally. Like an old, flickering black and white movie projector, *Minstrels* suggests travelling minstrels with their blackened faces, top hats and white coat-tails going through their routine, 'nervous and with humour,' 'mocking.'

Like Fauré, Debussy wrote songs from an early age and continued throughout his life, composing about 90 in all. Debussy is French song, says pianist and commentator Graham Johnson - [he is] "turn-of-the-century musical France personified." More than half of his entire songs were written for the singer Marie-Blanche Vasnier, with whom he had a long affair early in his career. The majority of these *mélodies*, which Debussy would rehearse and perform with her, went unpublished for many decades. *Pierrot* (*Pierrot*) was among them, the 20 year-old Debussy evidently deciding to hold back this vocal showpiece with its delight in the *double entendres* of the traditional folk song *Au clair de la lune*. Théodore de Banville's verse refers to a well-known stage *Pierrot* of the day. Debussy made some 13 settings of Banville in his early years, clearly finding the

poet's imagery and sexual nuance appropriate for the singer – to whom he dedicated the majority of his early songs and to whose house he was a daily visitor. Quivering piano arabesques flutter suggestively around brief *Zéphyr*, one of 15 songs written in 1881, his most productive year for the number of songs written. 1882 was only a little less productive, with a dozen songs. Among these is *Fête-galante* (*Gallant party*), whose neo-classical imagery is set into a correspondingly antique, pastoral musical landscape with its alluring, knowing vocal line.

The high coloratura tessitura of the songs for Vasnier continues with more from the *commedia dell'arte* in Verlaine's *Pantomime* (*Pantomime*) – above all at the end, as Columbine dreams of her love. *Apparition* (*Apparition*) is Debussy's first setting of a Mallarmé poem, newly published at the time. Its imagery of a melancholy moon, dying viols, childhood dreams and glimpse of the beloved's hair in the sunlight draws a highly sophisticated musical language from Debussy – now lush and salon-like after the style of Massenet, now with glimpses of the Debussy to come. *Regret* (*Regret*), at first glance a more conventional lament for lost love to

a poem by Paul Bourget, reveals subtleties and nuances in the loss. Debussy contrasts the heavy heart of a betrayed lover, deep in mysterious piano chords, with a soaring vocal line, free from worry, until anger comes with the realisation that betrayal leaves behind wounds. Debussy wrote his first setting of Verlaine, the sparkling *Mandoline* (*Mandolin*), almost a decade before Fauré's long-considered setting. It was the only song of the dozen he wrote in 1882 that he published. Its light-hearted effervescence complements both the poem with its traditional *commedia dell'arte* characters at play and the Watteau paintings that inspired both poet and composer. Debussy also drew *Clair de Lune* (*Moonlight*) from Verlaine's *Fêtes galantes* and composed two settings, almost a decade apart. The better-known 1891 version became the final song from the first set of his own *Fêtes galantes*. The earlier 1882 setting is a delicate, playful minuet which delights in the play of the maskers and bergamaskers of Verlaine's poem, exploring the innocence more than the melancholy behind their fantastic disguises.

— Program notes © 2013 Keith Horner.
Comments welcomed: khnotes@sympatico.ca

Upcoming Monday Evening Concerts



Monday, March 11, 2013 - 7:00 pm. Walter Hall
Shauna Rolston and Friends perform Dohnanyi's String Serenade, Brahms' Piano Quartet in G minor and Dvořák's Piano Quintet. Lydia Wong, piano; Annalee Patipatanakoon, Timothy Ying, violins; Teng Li, Eric Nowlin, violas.



Monday, March 25, 2013 - 7:00 pm. Walter Hall
The Gryphon Trio and Penderecki String Quartet perform the **Music of Christos Hatzis** to celebrate the composer's 60th birthday. Works to include his String Quartet No. 2 and excerpts from *Constantinople*.

Box Office: 416.408.0208

Biographies

Canadian soprano **LORNA MACDONALD** enjoys a career of distinction as an experienced performer, voice teacher, Professor of Voice and the Lois Marshall Chair in Voice Studies. From 1994-2007 she served as Head of Voice Studies at U of T, and she is a recipient of Ontario's prestigious OCUFA Award for "teaching excellence and outstanding contributions to university teaching". MacDonald heads up a graduate program in Voice Pedagogy in which the rich worlds of science, education and art are combined to prepare a new generation of young singers and voice teachers. Her performances and master classes have taken her throughout Canada and the US, in Wales, Taiwan, China, France, Ireland, the UK, Germany, Austria, and Bermuda. Canadian press reviews include "fiery soprano MacDonald dazzles", "an absolute jewel" (*Edmonton Journal*) "MacDonald's freshness of tone, her clarity of style and diction, and her beautifully expressive musicianship are served by a perfection of technical mastery which allows her to sing both softly and full on any note in her entire range, as meaning and emotional imagery require." (Halifax). Recent new opera roles include the title role in Mozart's *Zaide* for Opera Nova Scotia in May 2010, Antonida in Glinka's *Ivan Susannin* (2011) and Konstanze in Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in 2012. Lorna is an active adjudicator of major festivals and competitions such as the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, the finals of the Canadian National Music Competition, the Eckhardt-Grammatée competition, and the JUNO Awards. Described by the *Toronto Star* as a "master of transformation", she has been a guest clinician for a variety of summer programs including Westminster Master Teachers, Banff Centre, VISI, Halifax Summer Opera Workshop, Choral Music Experience, Summer Opera Lyric Theatre, the Institute for Church Music, National Festival of Music (Colorado) and the St. Michael's College Opera program, Victoria, and she has presented academic papers on

the singing voice at international symposia. With undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral level voice majors at the University of Toronto, former students who now head vocal programs in Canada and the US, collaborators in voice science, students who are performing internationally in concert, opera, on Broadway, in film, nominees for Juno and Grammy Awards, she, herself, is also the recipient of many vocal awards. The triple nature of MacDonald's academic, performance, and pedagogical career have brought her not only deep satisfaction, but she remains profoundly grateful for the talented and creative people who have touched her life.

Canadian pianist **HENRI-PAUL SICSIC** thrills audiences across North America and Europe with his intense, passionate and imaginative performances.

A concerto soloist, recitalist and chamber musician, pianist Henri-Paul Sicsic has appeared with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the Maryland Symphony Orchestra, the Pasadena Philharmonic, the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra, the Abbotsford Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Nice, among others. His performances have been aired in New York City on WQXR radio, on the National French program "France Musique" in other major centers in the U.S. and on the C.B.C. in Canada.

His teachers include Juliette Audibert-Lambert (herself a student of Gabriel Fauré and of Alfred Cortot), Pierre Sancan, and renowned pianist and master teacher John Perry.

Henri-Paul Sicsic is also an inspired pedagogue with a tremendous following. He was appointed to the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto in July of 2007. In 2005 he received the Killam Teaching Prize, one of the highest academic honours awarded in Canada.

Sicsic taught at Rice University from 1986 to 1992 as the associate of eminent

artist-teacher John Perry. He was a member of the piano faculty at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver for thirteen years. His strong commitment to teaching and ability to enrich and inspire young students is legendary, and his students have distinguished themselves at the national and international levels, earning prestigious Fulbright and Canada Council grants and winning top prizes and awards at major competitions.

At the Conservatoire de Nice, France, Sicsic was awarded a first prize with honours in piano, a first prize in chamber music, and a conducting diploma. As a pianist, he also received a first prize at the Grand Prix de la Ville de Nice Competition and top prize at the Royaume de la Musique National Radio Competition in France.

Henri-Paul is a proponent of the Alexander Technique and also studies Tai Chi Chuan. He enjoys French cuisine and is an avid runner.

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